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Viewing cable 06MEXICO456, MADRAZO AIMS FOR THE SENSIBLE CENTER

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| Reference ID | Created | Released | Classification | Origin |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 06MEXICO456 | 2006-01-27 20:41 | 2011-08-30 01:44 | CONFIDENTIAL | Embassy Mexico |

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MEXICO 000456

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SUBJECT: MADRAZO AIMS FOR THE SENSIBLE CENTER

REF: A. A) 05 MEXICO 7612

[B. B\) MEXICO 251](#)

[C. C\) 05 MEXICO 7426](#)

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR LESLIE A. BASSETT, REASONS:
1.4(B/D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Roberto Madrazo, candidate of the PRI-led Alliance for Mexico, has kicked off his campaign by trying to position himself as the candidate of the political center. Madrazo used the month long holiday break to smooth over the divisions in his fractious party, restructuring his campaign so as to put the full weight of the party machinery behind it. He has succeeded in integrating into his campaign structure -- at least for the moment -- key rivals from within the PRI's ranks. He also released his long promised personal financial statements, eliciting little negative publicity for their delayed release, or for the remarkably high reported net worth of this lifelong public servant. Yet despite his efforts, Madrazo remains third in all recent opinion polls, lagging by a considerable margin in at least one. And his success in forging party unity will be sorely tested in the months ahead, when the PRI finalizes its legislative lists: in order to win the support of his critics within the party and maintain the loyalty of his allies, he has made far more promises of political rewards than he will be able to keep. The publication of the PRI's legislative lists in March may end up disappointing some key supporters and fomenting party disunity just as the campaign enters its most intensive phase. End summary.

Staking Out the Middle Ground

[1](#)2. (SBU) On January 15, Roberto Madrazo Pintado officially registered with the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) as the presidential candidate of the Alliance for Mexico, consisting of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the Green Ecological Party of Mexico (PVEM). Madrazo used the opportunity of his post-registration rally -- his first public appearance as the Alliance's candidate -- to stake out the center of the Mexican political spectrum. Before a partisan crowd, he spoke about the importance of ending poverty and reducing inequality, while eschewing the cadences of class conflict preferred by his left-wing rival, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO). He addressed the issue of migration in relatively moderate terms, noting that while the proposed border fence (ref A) offended Mexicans, the migration problem had to be resolved first and foremost in Mexico, through economic growth and job creation. He said the next administration would need to devote its efforts to restoring Mexico's economic competitiveness, strengthening the rule of law, and reducing poverty and inequality. In subsequent campaign appearances, Madrazo has continued to tack to the center, dismissing Felipe Calderon as a "neoliberal," and AMLO as a "populist" and a "demagogue."

Papering Over Differences in the PRI

[1](#)3. (C) During the campaign "cease fire" declared by the IFE, Madrazo worked intensively behind the scenes both to restructure his campaign and to achieve unity -- or at least the appearance of unity -- within the PRI. Contacts in the party largely concur that he has been fairly successful in winning at least the token support of his erstwhile critics. Francisco Guerrero, Chief of Staff to Senate President Enrique Jackson, told poloff that several key leaders of the Everyone United Against Madrazo (TUCOM, for its Spanish acronym) faction have closed ranks with the candidate, an assertion supported by other contacts. Many of the supporters of former rival Arturo Montiel have been

integrated into the Madrazo team, most notably Montiel's former campaign manager and PRI heavyweight Manuel Cadena. Senate President Enrique Jackson, another leading member of TUCOM, has signed on to a senior advisory role in the campaign, and Nuevo Leon Governor Natividad Gonzalez has publicly backed Madrazo as well.

¶4. (C) At this point, it appears the only two major PRI figures who remain fully outside the fold are Sonora Governor Eduardo Bours and teacher's union leader Elba Esther Gordillo. Jose Alcalde, a political analyst with ties to the PRI, told poloff that Bours reportedly was contemplating a PRD offer to defect; whether or not true, the influential governor has not concealed his desire to undermine Madrazo's campaign. As for Gordillo, she and Madrazo appear to have settled into a temporary stalemate in their long-simmering feud. The PRI suspended its effort to formally evict her from the party, fearing that, according to PRI Deputy Jose Alberto Aguilar, doing so would cause it unnecessary political damage. For her part, Gordillo appears content to

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remain a titular member of the PRI, while openly supporting the candidate of the New Alliance party, her protege and former PRI deputy Roberto Campa. We suspect Gordillo is more likely to break this uneasy stalemate than is Madrazo, and if she does, Aguilar believes it would cost the PRI most, but not all, of the 16-20 deputies who are loyal to Gordillo.

The High Price of Unity

¶5. (C) While Madrazo has managed to paper over differences with most of his critics in the PRI, this semblance of unity came at a high price, a price that will come due in March, when the party finalizes its national lists for the legislative elections. Francisco Guerrero told poloff that in order to secure the support of those senior PRI leaders who initially opposed his candidacy, Madrazo presumably promised many of them high-ranking spots on the party's electoral lists. He undoubtedly has made similar promises not only to his numerous long-term supporters, but also to other assorted party luminaries.

¶6. (C) Moreover, according to the terms of the PRI's alliance with the Green Ecological Party of Mexico (PVEM), four of the Senate list's top eight spots have been set aside for PVEM candidates. In fact, the Senate list affords relatively few opportunities to reward political allies. While the party can list 32 candidates, only the most optimistic of Madrazo supporters would be satisfied with a position outside of the top 12; in the last legislative elections, the PRI succeeded in electing only 12 senatorial candidates from its national list, and this year's race promises to be more competitive. Guerrero suspects -- and other contacts tend to agree -- that the electoral lists will leave some Madrazo supporters very dissatisfied, creating the possibility of major dissension in the party just as the campaign enters its most intensive phase.

Counting on the Machine

¶7. (SBU) Unlike the campaigns of his two principal rivals, which are managed separately from their party apparatus, in December, the Madrazo campaign integrated its operation with that of the PRI party apparatus, even physically moving the campaign's offices to the PRI headquarters. PRI president Mariano Palacio Alcocer has agreed to serve concurrently as Madrazo's campaign manager, to ensure that the full weight of the PRI political machine is employed on behalf of his campaign. According to campaign media advisor Ady Garcia, the campaign has set up a number of regional and thematic directorates, to ensure that the regional PRI operations are well-coordinated.

¶8. (C) The party appears to be counting on its well-organized nationwide political machine to give it the margin of victory in this election. The PRI boasts of having between 9 and 10 million hard core loyalists, of whose unconditional support the party is confident. Assuming this large base holds, our contacts observe that Madrazo would need to win over far fewer uncommitted voters than his rivals in order to win the election. They believe that their party's superior political machine will pick off enough uncommitted voters to swing the election to Madrazo.

Transparency Starts at Home

¶9. (SBU) To the surprise of many, on January 18, Madrazo actually complied with a longstanding promise to release information concerning his personal finances. His financial statement revealed that this lifelong public servant has a net worth of approximately USD 3 million, including four luxury condominiums in Mexico City, all purchased in 2004, other properties in the capital and in his home state of Tabasco, and a Porsche automobile (among others) worth approximately \$100,000. He further revealed that his wife -- the widow of the scion of one of Mexico's wealthiest families -- owns a luxury condominium in Williams Island, Florida. One issue that remains murky, at least in press accounts surrounding the release of Madrazo's financial statement, is his ownership of a second Williams Island luxury condo. This property sparked controversy last fall (ref A), when Reforma reported that Madrazo had purchased the property through a British Virgin Islands company. Recent press reporting has stated that Madrazo rents this condominium and has an option to purchase it; the reporting does not confirm whether Madrazo controls the offshore company that owns the condo, as earlier reporting strongly suggested.

Comment: Where are the Loyal PRI Voters?

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¶10. (C) A consummate political operator, Madrazo appears to have been fairly successful in uniting his party -- at least to the public eye -- and surviving to wage the general election campaign. However, by making profligate promises of political rewards, he has set himself up for a possible crisis in March, when the party's electoral lists will be published, and he will have to make good on those promises. Indeed, many in the party are questioning the wisdom of promising four of the party's top eight Senate spots to the PVEM, a party that historically has drawn only approximately 5 percent of the national vote. Madrazo may need to draw on all of his formidable political skills to navigate the intra-party crisis that the publication of the legislative lists could provoke. On the other hand, the candidate has built a long political career on the practice of making promises he knows he may be unable to keep, and he may be counting on his ability to pull this off one more time.

¶11. (C) With nearly six months to go until Election Day, this is very much a three-way race and it is entirely possible that it will remain that way until the finish line. Although Madrazo is lagging for the moment, the PRI's organizational advantages are considerable and many in the party are so hungry to return to power, they will use every tactic at their disposal -- no matter how ignoble -- to win. In a closely fought, three-way race, the final advantage might go to the candidate who makes the fewest mistakes, a dynamic that could tend to favor the highly experienced Madrazo. Nevertheless, we have trouble reconciling PRI claims of a 10 million vote rock solid base with Madrazo's polling in the low to mid 20 percent range. We cannot help but wonder whether even for many formerly loyal PRIistas, a vote for Madrazo is a bridge too far, or if the candidate simply has no traction whatsoever beyond his base. End comment.

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GARZA